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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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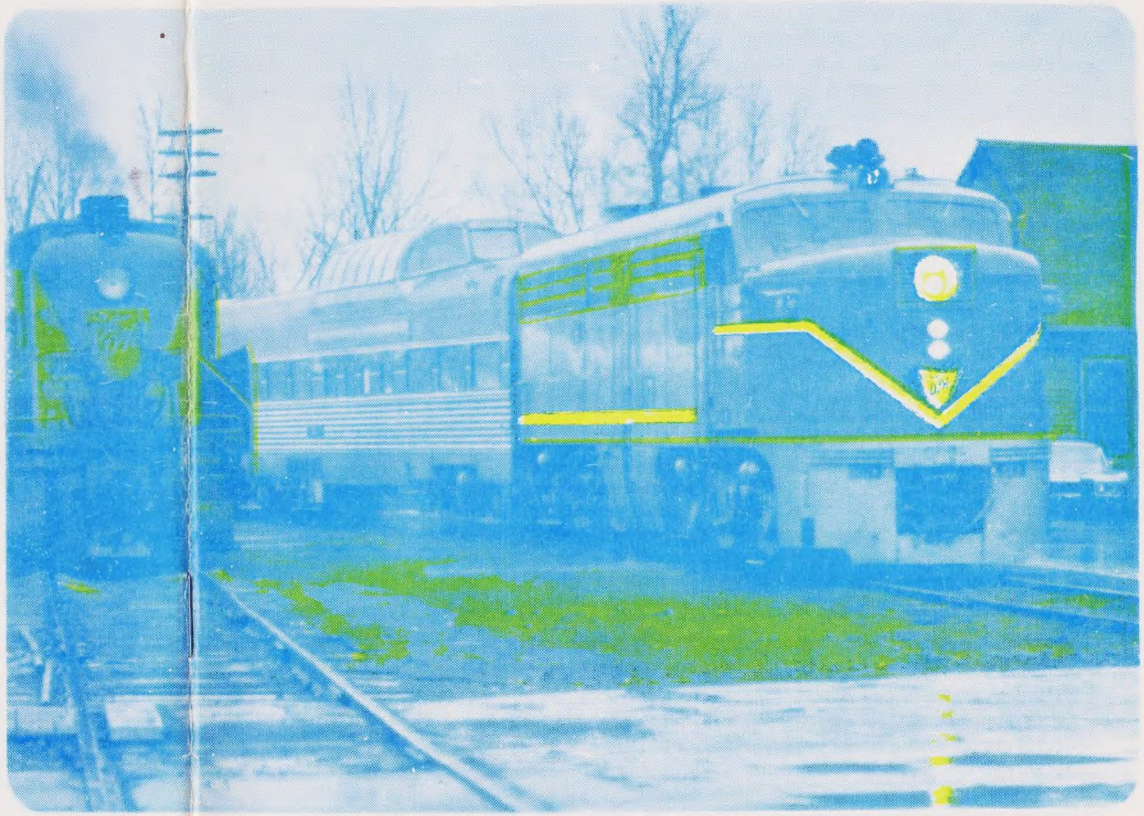

Readers Rate the Trains

LETTERS

In a recent letter to RTN (1st Sept issue) I made the statement that "Dallas had put its money where its mouth is," in reply to some critics of our efforts in this area. I should like to point out in this letter that Dallas has again placed its coin of the realm in the same area of its anatomy. On Dec 9, as municipal bond elections were going down the drain in other cities, Dallas stood tall and voted overwhelmingly in favor of a $149.8 million bond issue for general improvements, defying predictions of the skeptics.

Included in the improvements was a proposition pertaining to transportation, and this proposition contained a figure of $2.3 million for further renovation of Dallas Union Terminal. It will be recalled that Dallas voters in 1972 approved $6 million in bonds for the purchase of the Terminal and preliminary renovation. This will make a total of $8.3 million committed by Dallas to Amtrak and the multi-modal transportation center concept.

Dallas badly needs a daily INTER-AMERICAN on a better route, a direct-to-Houston LONE STAR, and convenient east-west service. Amtrak has appealed for state and local assistance wherever it can be provided so that federal funds can be used for other improvements. Dallas has set an impressive example for other cities to follow. If Amtrak is sincere regarding local aid, they will reciprocate by transforming the present token service to Dallas into something effective. Failure to do this would imply that their quest for a helping hand is not valid.

Let there be no more bellyaching about Dallas's diligent efforts to acquire Amtrak service. It is suggested that the dissidents go to work on their own communities to duplicate Dallas's results.

M. D. Monaghan
Dallas City-County Amtrak Committee

Garland, Texas

The National Association of Railroad Passengers was characterized by Mr. Robert Douglas (LETTERS, 1st Nov issue) as a group of "Railfans." This is false. While there are many fine U.S. Railfan organizations, such as the National Railway Historical Society, NARP is not one of them.

What is NARP? It is a group of dedicated "Rail Travel Supporters and Promoters" who are concerned about present passenger train service and who work for an improved future. The past is of interest to Rail Travel Promoters, but only insofar as lessons can be learned from it for application to the future. Railfan hobbyists, on the other hand, are dedicated to the past in and of itself. Many are experts on antique equipment, including its preservation, restoration, and/or excursion operation. Some Rail Travel Promoters also happen to be Railfans. And is there anything incongruous about this combination? Similarly, there are Super-Highway Proponents who also happen to be Antique Car Buffs.

So, Mr. Douglas, do you now understand the difference between such groups as NRHS and NARP?

Howard J. Davy

Minneapolis, Minnesota

(Letter to the National Association of Motor Bus Owners:)

Subsidized Sirs: Oh, how the enclosed advertisement ("Uncle Sam Could Buy a Bus Ticket for Every Amtrak Passenger") has hurt you!

1. It calls clear attention to a rapidly expanding, modern rail passenger system.
2. It admits defeat. Why is bus patronage hurt when modern trains are available?
3. REPLY: The motor bus has proven to be the vehicle of last resort for the average American--even before the 55mph limit. In terms of modal preference, even halfway decent rail service is an obvious threat to you. Your ad says it.
4. As an executive, I've traveled thousands of miles since your ad first appeared. I've gone by jet once, several times by Amtrak--with a necessary connection once by Continental Trailways--and I've studiously avoided Greyhound altogether.

The "pot-calling-the-kettle-black" routine is not fooling the populace. Start building your own highways, and paying taxes (not just user-charges) on same. Then you can attack the railroads as an equal--not as a grey underdog. Think about it.

William K. Viekman

Colorado Springs, Colorado

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STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Malibu; Jack Ferry, Chicago; Kenneth Maylath, Baltimore; Peter Roehm, Boston. Artist: Nick Stern. Mailing date this issue: Jan 16, 1976.

ON THE COVER:

The Amtrak-D&H ADIRONDACK heralds our first issue of 1976, containing the results of our second reader train rating survey. The ADIRONDACK (some think of it as a non-Amtrak train), as you will see, proved to be the most highly rated of Amtrak trains. In this photo, Alco PA no. 17 is leading Amtrak dome coach 9562 on the southbound train at Rouses Point, NY, the U.S. customs stop. The remainder of the consist on that wet Dec 6 can be found on page 20 of the First Dec issue. At the far left is a D&H Alco road switcher. From a color photo by Walter F. Smith.

COMING UP: From the reader survey, you will note that AUTO-TRAIN was the most highly rated train in North America. To find what all the shouting was about, we sent Peter Bretz East to ride the train and report back to us. In our next issue, we'll present his story--possibly the most informative report on Auto-Train operations yet published. Be sure not to miss it. Also watch for our best photo section ever next time.

The usual chronology of events of the past year, generally published here in January, will not appear in RTN this year because of the press of other newsworthy material. It will appear instead in our 1975 Yearbook, still in production. Orders for the forthcoming yearbook are still being taken. The cost is $3.50 each postpaid (add tax in California) from Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

PRESIDENT FORD EXPECTED TO SIGN RAILROAD BILL

The Omnibus Railroad Bill, passed by Congress in December, but facing a promised veto by President Ford, has been returned to a Congressional compromise committee for changes that hopefully will make it acceptable to the White House. Washington reports said that among the changes was a scaling down from $2.6 billion to about $1.75 billion in the funds to be allocated for upgrading of the Colonial Corridor between Washington and Boston. This amount is said to permit adoption of a 2-hour, 40-min running time between Washington and New York, with 5 stops, and a 3-hour, 40-min New York-Boston time, also with 5 stops. Another change has given the DOT control of the spending of these funds. Amtrak's board of directors previously voted to purchase the Corridor outright from ConRail. Congressional negotiations were concluded Jan 14, and the revised bill is expected to be approved by both houses of Congress while this issue of RTN is in the mail, after which Ford could sign it.

A MASSIVE TRANSIT WRECK IN CHICAGO

A total of 455 people were injured Jan 9 when a Chicago Transit Authority train on the Kennedy line struck the rear of another train which had stopped at the Addison Street station. One male passenger died on Jan 10 of injuries suffered. As of Jan 13, 58 were still hsopitalized, with one in serious condition. The wreck happened at 8:10am, during the morning rush hours. Reportedly, an automatic stop device on the moving train was not functioning when the train went into service that day. The operator of the train told the press he was blinded by sun glaring off snow and did not see the train ahead. Chicago's Mayor Daley said he was concerned about the frequency of CTA accidents.

The mailing date of this issue of RTN has been changed to Jan 19 due to production delays. It contains news up to Jan 18.

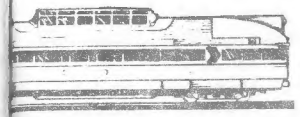
Readers Rate the Trains

1 —— 2 —— 3 —— 4 —— 5 —— 6 —— 7 —— 8 —— 9

EXTREMELY POOR — AVERAGE, ACCEPTABLE — EXTREMELY GOOD

Here are the results of our second reader train rating survey, covering the period June 15-Dec 15, 1975. Readers volunteered ratings of trains they had ridden during that period, in eleven categories (lettered A-K), each on a scale of 1-9, as shown above. Again, we have divided the trains into groups of Unconventional trains, Short Distance & Corridor, Long Distance, and this time also a Canadian group. Within each group we ranked the trains on the basis of the average rating on category A, overall impression of the train taking everything into account. At the far right of each table is the train's rank in its group, and just before it is its rank in the last survey for comparison. The figures in the tables are the average (mean) rating given by all readers who rated that train. If a certain train does not appear in a table, it is because we received too few ratings to tally. Results of our first survey appeared in the Second June 1975 issue, available at 35¢ each, and in RTN's Rail Travel Yearbook 1975, to be published shortly, and costing $3.50 postpaid.

UNCONVENTIONAL TRAINS	A. OVERALL	B. NON-FOOD CREW	C. FOOD, LOUNGE CREW	D. FOOD QUALITY	E. CONDITION OF CARS	F. ROUTING	G. STATION SERVICES	H. TRACK & ROADBED	I. SCHEDULING	J. PROMOTION	K. TYPE OF CARS	PREVIOUS RANK	PRESENT RANK
N.E. Corridor Amfleet	7.6	6.7	6.3	5.6	8.4	8.5	6.9	5.8	7.3	4.0	8.1		1
Metroliners	7.1	7.1	6.3	5.0	6.6	8.6	6.2	6.0	8.1	7.4	7.2	1	2
St. Louis Turboliners	6.9	7.2	6.5	5.9	7.2	7.3	4.8	4.8	5.9	5.2	6.3	4	3
Detroit Turboliners	6.8	6.4	6.2	5.4	7.8	7.9	6.2	5.3	7.0	7.0	6.8	3	4
N.E. Turbotrains	6.5	6.8	6.2	5.5	6.5	7.5	6.2	6.5	6.7	4.3	7.2	2	5
SHORT DISTANCE & CORRIDOR TRAINS													
ARROWHEAD	7.5	8.5	8.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	4.0	7.5		1
BLACK HAWK	7.5	8.5	6.0	4.0	6.0	8.5	6.0	5.5	5.5	1.0	5.5	2	1
BLUE WATER	7.2	6.8	6.5	5.5	7.2	8.0	6.8	5.2	5.2	4.0	7.5	14	3
SAN DIEGANS	6.9	6.9	6.4	6.2	6.4	8.6	7.4	7.4	7.6	2.3	6.0	7	4
QUAD CITIES ROCKET (RI)	6.8	6.8	8.2	8.5	6.9	7.0	6.4	4.6	8.0	4.9	7.0	15	5
ABRAHAM LINCOLN	6.5	7.0	8.2	8.0	7.0	8.5	5.0	4.5	6.5	5.5	8.0		6
Empire Service	6.4	6.8	6.0	5.0	5.8	8.8	6.0	6.0	6.8	3.8	5.5	9	7
Hiawatha Service	6.3	6.2	5.3	3.5	6.3	7.8	8.0	7.3	6.8	4.2	6.2	7	8
PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL	6.2	6.0	5.8	6.0	7.1	8.7	6.7	7.0	5.0	5.2	6.2	10	9
BLUE RIDGE	6.2	7.0	6.2	3.2	5.5	7.2	3.5	7.0	7.5	5.5	5.0	11	9
SAN JOAQUIN	6.0	7.8	5.2	4.0	7.5	6.0	6.0	8.2	6.7	4.0	6.0	5	11
PUGET SOUND/MT. RAINIER	5.8	6.4	5.0	5.2	6.0	8.9	6.2	6.0	7.4	5.5	6.3	2	12
Inland Route RDCs	5.3	6.3			6.5	8.5	6.7	6.7	6.5	2.0	5.6		13
N.E. Conventional Trains	5.2	5.0	4.7	3.8	4.8	8.2	6.2	5.7	7.1	3.1	5.2	12	14
PIEDMONT (SR)	4.2	4.8	4.2	3.2	6.0	5.6	3.0	7.0	3.9	2.0	3.4	17	15
Chic-St. L. Conventional	3.5	5.5	6.0	1.0	2.5	7.5	6.0	6.7	6.0	3.5	4.0		16



LONG DISTANCE TRAINS	A. OVERALL	B. NON-FOOD CREW	C. FOOD, LOUNGE CREW	D. FOOD QUALITY	E. CONDITION OF CARS	F. ROUTING	G. STATION SERVICES	H. TRACK & ROADBED	I. SCHEDULING	J. PROMOTION	K. TYPE OF CARS	PREVIOUS RANK	PRESENT RANK
AUTO-TRAIN (A-T)	8.5	8.8	8.0	6.8	8.2	8.2	7.8	7.5	8.5	6.2	8.4		1
ADIRONDACK	8.0	8.3	8.1	7.2	7.4	8.6	5.6	6.2	6.9	4.9	7.0	5	2
SOUTHERN CRESCENT (SR)	7.9	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.7	7.6	5.4	6.9	7.0	3.9	6.9	1	3
RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR (DRGW)	7.6	7.2	7.2	7.9	7.2	8.9	5.6	7.3	6.7	2.8	8.5	3	4
SOUTHWEST LIMITED	7.5	6.4	6.4	6.8	6.8	7.5	7.1	7.2	7.7	3.9	7.9	2	5
SILVER METEOR*	7.2	6.5	7.3	6.8	6.3	7.5	7.0	6.5	6.7	4.4	7.6	3	6
EMPIRE BUILDER	7.1	6.7	7.2	7.0	5.8	7.3	6.2	6.6	6.8	3.0	7.8	9	7
COAST STARLIGHT	7.0	6.2	5.3	7.0	6.8	8.6	6.9	7.5	7.2	4.1	6.1	7	8
FLORIDIAN	7.0	8.2	7.8	6.2	6.0	5.5	6.5	7.2	6.8	5.2	6.5	22	8
LAKE SHORE LIMITED	6.9	6.6	7.1	7.5	7.0	8.4	5.7	6.0	6.0	6.4	6.0		10
LONE STAR	6.8	6.6	6.8	7.7	6.9	7.1	6.0	6.4	6.7	2.6	7.2	7	11
NIGHT OWL	6.8	7.3	2.0	4.0	6.7	8.3	6.7	6.3	7.3	3.3	7.3	12	11
NORTH COAST HIAWATHA	6.6	6.2	6.0	7.5	6.2	7.6	6.8	5.2	6.8	2.6	7.5	13	13
SILVER STAR	6.4	6.6	6.7	7.0	5.7	7.8	7.0	6.4	6.5	3.3	6.6	5	14
SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR	6.4	6.1	6.0	6.2	5.5	6.4	5.6	5.8	5.8	3.0	6.3	18	14
MONTREALER	6.3	6.1	6.3	7.1	5.9	7.9	7.2	6.1	6.9	3.7	6.8	9	16
SUNSET LIMITED	6.3	6.0	5.7	5.4	5.3	7.3	5.0	4.6	6.3	2.8	5.6	13	16
NATIONAL LIMITED	6.1	6.8	7.2	6.3	5.5	7.4	4.6	5.4	4.7	2.4	5.9	24	18
PANAMA LIMITED	6.0	7.2	6.5	5.8	6.8	8.8	7.2	4.8	6.2	2.2	5.8	23	19
EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS	5.9	6.0	5.1	5.4	5.8	8.8	4.4	5.9	6.8	2.9	6.1	9	20
MOUNTAINEER	5.7	6.0	5.0	5.7	5.2	5.7	6.0	5.3	4.3	5.3	5.0	17	21
INTER-AMERICAN	5.5	7.3	6.3	6.0	5.3	6.0	2.3	7.7	5.3	1.7	5.0	21	22
SOUTHERN CRESCENT (Amtrak)	5.3	6.0	5.2	4.0	5.6	8.7	6.2	4.8	7.8	5.5	5.0	13	23
BROADWAY LIMITED	5.3	5.1	5.4	6.8	4.8	6.6	4.6	2.9	4.8	2.7	6.5	20	23
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY	4.6	4.6	3.2	5.6	4.6	4.7	5.6	6.0	3.8	2.0	4.9	19	25

*combined with CHAMPION during fall season

CANADIAN TRAINS													
CN OCEAN	8.0	7.3	8.7	7.7	6.3	8.0	7.3	7.0	7.3	5.0	7.7		1
CP CANADIAN	7.8	7.4	7.9	7.1	8.4	8.7	6.9	8.1	8.2	2.3	8.6		2
CN Turbotrains	7.0	5.7	5.0	5.3	7.0	7.7	6.7	5.7	7.3	6.3	6.0		3
CN CAVALIER	6.4	6.5	7.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	6.3	6.5	7.2	4.0	6.5		4
CN SUPER CONTINENTAL	6.3	6.7	5.8	6.5	7.0	7.5	7.6	5.8	4.4	5.3	7.1		5
CP Dominion-Atlantic #1-2	6.3	7.0			7.0	8.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	2.7	5.7		5
CN SCOTIAN	6.0	4.7	5.5	5.5	6.3	7.0	7.0	6.7	4.3	4.0	6.0		7
CN Tempo Trains	6.0	6.3	6.0	5.2	6.2	7.7	6.3	7.2	7.3	3.5	5.2		7
CN NORTHLAND	5.5	6.5	5.5	5.0	5.0	7.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	3.0	5.5		9
CN RDC 611-612	5.5	6.5			6.0	6.5	6.0	6.5	7.5	4.0	5.0		9
CN Rapidos	5.3	6.3	5.5	5.5	7.0	7.3	7.3	7.3	6.7	5.3	4.7		11
CP ex-ATLANTIC LIMITED	5.2	5.8	5.5	4.8	7.0	7.2	5.5	5.5	6.5	2.5	6.2		12

In the present survey, readers had 6 months to submit ratings, rather than 2 months, as in our first survey. Thus we were able to obtain ratings of AUTO-TRAIN as well as a number of Canadian trains we couldn't include before.

It is obvious from the figures that AUTO-TRAIN obtained the highest ratings of any American passenger train. Amtrak's ADIRONDACK climbed up to no. 2 position among long distance trains, and in the unconventional equipment category, the Amfleet cars got the most votes, outshining the Metroliners. The ICG can still boast of its high train crew ratings on the BLACK HAWK, and that train is joined by a competitor, the ARROWHEAD, which received similar ratings. The AUTO-TRAIN crews, however, are now voted the most outstanding in America.

Let us now allow the readers to speak in the following excerpts from their comments that accompanied their train ratings.

AUTO-TRAIN

"AUTO-TRAIN is a sight to behold when it departs the Lorton, VA terminal, as on July 27 with 47 cars including 24 auto-racks, one steam generator, two diners, five sleepers, and 15 domes, pulled by three GE U36C engines. Has there ever been a train with that many domes before?" (Adron F. Hall, Alexandria, VA).

"The quality of service was superb from the time I put my reservations in until I reached my destination. The on-board personnel, including the conductor and brakemen did everything possible to make our trip enjoyable. The food was good... The cars were spotless, and from the top of the dome to the restrooms were immaculate. Can you imagine that they were cleaning the domes at 2:30 in the morning? There is absolutely no promotion of this train in Texas, and you can't get A-T by the toll-free number. I just wish Amtrak would use domes on all their trains and stop putting lexan in their domes. People want to see where they are going and view the countryside. A-T fills the need of seeing the country plus giving excellent service. It is perhaps the finest train in America today" (Mr & Mrs Wayne Davis, Schertz,TX).

"Extremely good train. Service was superb. Cars very clean and nice" (Roger P. Sherman, Minneapolis, MN).

"A real quality operation" (Walter Zullig, Jr., Larchmont, NY).

"Would have gotten overall rating of 8 had it not been for a very rough ride with run-ins and outs. Best on-board services found on any contemporary train. Coach seating particularly nice" (Peter Bretz, Malibu, CA).

ADIRONDACK

"D&H people are proud of their service. All employees friendly and equipment in good condition. D&H employees boarded at Rensselaer and took charge of diner-lounge; tables were re-set in blue and yellow (D&H colors). Trainmen wear yellow or blue blazers and the opposite color tie. Three of four waitresses (on two trains) were blondes, but alas, the fourth did not have blue hair." (John Kramer, W. Henrietta, NY)

"We had little reason to think it wasn't one of the excellent non-Amtrak trains of the country" (Al Crossley, Groton, CT).

"The quality of this service is unparalled in the Northeast. The scenery is captivating as seen thru the large glass windows. The D&H cars are plushly refurbished, every chrome or painted surface is polished to a high gloss and in every other respect are immaculate. The conductor was very proficient and informative, giving a rundown of all destinations in Grand Central and announcing all stops and proper exits to be used. He was even versed on the landmarks and history along the route. The dining car personnel were experienced older men who displayed a level of efficiency and courtesy I have yet to encounter on Amtrak. The food is good, reasonably priced, and served on the D&H's own china. This railroad knows how to run a train" (John Crate, Oneonta, NY).

"The D&H crews exuded a delirious joy and personal touch in handling passengers; the conductor remembered some of the passengers who had traveled northbound with him; to one young lady depressed by her stay in Montreal he kept pointing out all the positive benefits and side effects of her trip" (Thomas H. Moore III, Gardiner, ME).

"The dome car was a mess. The windows looked as if someone had run an ice pick across them" (Amtrak employee, Los Angeles, CA).

"Diner-lounge crew headed by Ellyn are exceptional. They work for D&H, not Amtrak, and the difference is like night and day. They're courteous, friendly and efficient, and quite willing to go out of their way to please passengers. Ellyn is the hardest-working, least-complaining service person I have ever seen aboard any train anywhere" (Reader, Albany, NY).

"Amtrak dome has lexan (boo!), but D&H equipment has glass, rare in the East. Ellyn is a nice hostess! One of thebest trains" (S. Dana Williams, E. Hartford, CT).

"A pleasant ride, marred only by unrestrained children, radio players, and a violinist holding forth in the rear coach. The route is marvelous, altho a backing move in Albany and a long layover in Rensselaer ate up time. The D&H crew was excellent, especially in the diner (Robert Wassmer, Ossining, NY).

"If I were to choose an almost 'perfect' train, this would be it. From Alco PA and dome car to outstanding food in the diner, plus pleasing interiors and excellent scenery, this train is one of the best in North America" (Peter Bretz, Malibu, CA).

SOUTHERN CRESCENT

"As usual, this train was super! The only significant problem is the lack of a full lounge car. The sleeper-lounge is not adequate" (C. A. Rudisel, White Bear Lake, MN).

"It's largely the example of what a first class train is. It's problem is that it must operate as an every-stop, no-other-choice train on its route. For the pullman patron, middle-class coach or railfan, the shiny train is a grand operation. The poorer traveler would probably be advised to avoid the $4-7 dinner in the diner and bring his own sandwich vs. the $1 ones in the coach lounge. The train needs a snack diner for these people using buffet service. The one diner was full both directions from 7-10pm. I guess that really is putting a diner to use, but will a mother with young, screaming children who finally gets served at 9:30pm ride again? I hope they keep her running as is, but they must also add new services for a changing society and because the train is a local, not an extra-fare limited" (Don W. Porter, Lexington, KY).

"Condition and maintenance of the equipment is really amazing; everything is clean, including the windows! Not a single light bulb out or missing. More lounge facilities would be desirable..." (Ian Daley, New York, NY).

"The dome car was not used by many people but it was a delightful way to see the country. The porter handled <u>all</u> baggage from the platform at Atlanta, on to the train, into the racks over our seats, back to platform, and down to the groun in New Orleans--and such a happy person too. We all were sorry the trip came to an end at New Orleans!" (E.H. Swift, Sonoma, CA).

"This train is vastly over-rated. Promotion and advertising severely lacking, possibly contributing to decreased winter patronage. In summer two dining cars are needed for Washington-Atlanta portion" (Reader, Alexandria, VA).

RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR

"A very nice train. The interiors have been refurbished excellently. The handling was a bit rough and our dome was hot. The ride in "Silver Mustang" became wild when the speed neared 60mph. It shook, rattled and vibrated until we thought it would collapse. It still was an enjoyable ride and the scenery was magnificent" (Jonathan Hursh, Warrensburg, MO).

"Faced so often by a train as empty as our Monday morning westbound, the crew makes a heroic effort to stay sharp and keep the level of service as high as we found it. Every crew member we talked to accepted our thanks graciously and invited us back. The menus invite the passenger to an all-but-forgotten world of rail dining. With brand new green and gold upholstery in the domes and coaches, the RGZ is a sharper looking train than last year, but lexan has gotten a toehold in one of the forward windows of 'Silver Sky'" (Al Crossley, Groton, CT).

"Without a doubt the most amazing scenery and track work in the country... A very nice touch was that meals were announced throughout the train several times; it's too bad Amtrak doesn't bother" (Lee K. Rosenblum, Yellow Springs, OH).

"Long ticket lines in Denver delayed departure for 30mins, and arrival in Glenwood Springs was 40mins late. When you get up before 6:00 to make a train, you'd like it to leave on time! D&RGW apparently treats it like an excursion train, but then it should be so billed" (Wm. D. Benswanger, Pittsburgh, PA).

"Had to wait much too long in Denver Union Station for reservations previously made" (William M. Folger, Greeley, CO).

SOUTHWEST LIMITED

"This is still Amtrak's train of trains. 'Would you like another glass of iced tea?' a waiter at no extra charge. 'Is everything all right?' was a question I was kindly asked several times. The whole crew was helpful and courteous. The dome with its single swivel chairs puts the train in a class of its own. Only two things detracted--3 of the 8 main viewing windows were dirty or steamed, and all the forward and backward windows were filthy. While dome started out clean, cups and other trash were not cleaned out periodically. However, none of the dome or dining windows were lexan. Passengers had many positive comments" (Jeff Cole, Carpinteria, CA).

"Mostly young, inexperienced porters--not very helpful. Excellent

food at very reasonable prices" (Clyde L. Anderson, St. Louis, MO).

"Porters slow; usual service to first class passengers appears to be deteriorating from former service--kind of 'let the passenger get along as best he can'. Quality of food good, but not much choice; no more lamb chops; dog-eared menus... Cars old, not too clean; electric outlets not functioning; not enough soap or towels; air conditioning poor at times... track is rapidly becoming rougher; should have compartments and drawing rooms" (Reader, Alva, OK).

"Food and dining service very poor. My roomette had not been cleaned" (George M. Jenks, Lewisburg, PA).

"Used special menus, but entrees limited to four. Steward and dining car personnel harried but trying. Ran out of steak and fish the second night out. All station facilities except Chicago badly deteriorated. Chicago's new Amtrak lounge a real plus; however, personnel in lounge poorly informed; couldn't tell passengers at what track the SWL was loading. Chick-in at track gate a disaster. About 90° and all coach and sleeper passengers had to check in with one Amtrak employee--took me 30 minutes. Line full of disgruntled passengers" (Reader, Everett, WA).

"Very disappointed in the porters; they seemed lazy and somewhat indifferent. Fantastic food at reasonable prices! The filet of sole was the best I have ever tasted! Quantity of food overwhelmed me. I ate so much I almost got sick (and I still had dessert coming), all for under $3!" (D.R. Fakes, Kingman, KS).

"Track in fine shape except San Bernardino-L.A., probably because this is not really an important main line--most freight goes via Riverside, Corona and Fullerton. But new track, all-welded, in freeway median completed in September between Pasadena station and Arcadia has eliminated over 40 grade crossings and 20mph areas. New speed limit 60mph, yet no pickup in times" (Mark Johnston, Pasadena, CA).

"I heard much scuttlebut about a May 1, 1976 upgrading of service--special menus, silverware, finger bowls, etc. We'll see" (Arthur Gruber, Phoenix, AZ).

"Service quite good. Kosher meals available, tho I had to make sure myself that they got on during my layover in Chicago" (Pesach Leib Kremen, Coronado, CA).

SILVER METEOR

"For this trip I gave it several "9" ratings because it was indeed excellent service in almost every aspect" (Adron F. Hall, Alexandria, VA).

"No dome or observation car. SCL train crew much more friendly than Amtrak personnel. Too much lexan. Otherwise, all equipment seemed to be in pretty good shape" (David Hill, Gainesville, FL).

"Route suffers from understandable failure to use the FEC line direct down the coast. Station at Jacksonville terribly deteriorated--a little bit of nothing a million miles from nowhere" (John H. Schmidt, Des Moines, IA).

"Train was due out of Philadelphia at 4:30pm and into Washington at 6:50, while the SOUTHERN CRESCENT was due out of Philadelphia at 4:44 and into Washington at 6:55. Both trains were running late and lost 25-30 minutes more. Between Baltimore and Washington the CRESCENT passed the METEOR and was brought into Washington ahead instead of behind it by 5 minutes, perhaps because of the Southern's insistence on operating the SOUTHERN CRESCENT on time" (Charles I. Griffith, Washington, DC).

EMPIRE BUILDER

"Consist handsomely endowed with domes and lounges. Lexan panels mar the view from several of the domes, tho. Friendly atmosphere in dining car, good rapport between steward and crew. Milwaukee Road tracks very bumpy, almost made it impossible to eat. Sleeper I was in had a/c breakdown just out of Chicago; BN crew worked on it for an hour at Minneapolis but no luck" (Ian Daley, New York, NY).

"The Milwaukee Road operating crew is not content to simply smile, take tickets, and say thank you. Instead some of them fancy themselves comedians and find it necessary to insult passengers with inept jokes and asinine comments. Others spend their time hiking from one end of the train to the other, attempting to hustle every girl in sight, and in the process neglecting other duties. The BN crews are slightly better. The young female porters Amtrak has don't know their jobs" (C.A. Rudisel, St. Paul, MN).

"This was one of the most enjoyable trips I have ever taken. Everybody aboard the train did everything possible to make the trip nice. Once when the sleeping car porter was eating, the brakeman got us a table to set up in our room. Another brakeman, in the dome, pointed out various points of interest. The dining car crew was super! I watched a waiter give two little boys traveling alone "first class" service including extra food. He joked with them, etc., and did all this knowing that he wouldn't get a dime as a tip. Everybody aboard took great pride in the train they worked on. We had a couple of old ladies who did nothing but gripe. They even found fault with the colors their rooms were done in. They were surprised by the large number of people on the train. 'I didn't think anybody rode the train anymore,' they said whenever they got a chance" (H. Martin Swan, St. Paul, MN).

"After this summer's trip on the ghost of the EMPIRE BUILDER, Amtrak has totally divested itself of all credibility in my eyes... It is most apparent that Amtrak is strictly interested in selling the ticket; once you're on the train, you're on your own... Overflowing trash bags were strewn around the Great Dome lounge car and in the vestibule; the front of the bar and side booths were cluttered and used as storage for boxes of soft drinks and snacks. No newspapers were to be found in the lounge... Granting the problem of overaged equipment and deteriorated roadbed Amtrak inherited, there is no way around the most obvious problems that rest solely in the hands of Amtrak: on-board services and personnel. From what I witnessed, nobody was really in charge of the train, and by default, authority for the train's services was in the hands of the railroad crew or unsupervised Amtrak personnel... How long would an airline stay in business if it retained employees with such abysmal attitudes towards serving passengers? What Amtrak has consistently failed to realize is that, like the airlines, passenger railroading is a service industry, with the company's solvent future riding on the strengths of its employees. Amtrak can no longer afford to retain on duty agitated and surly personnel, nor can it properly retrain and coax these people out of their negative attitudes. Considering the high fares people have to pay to ride the trains these days, the last thing anybody wants to hear from an employee is 'It's not in my job description'" (Mark Singer, Evanston, IL).

"The EMPIRE BUILDER out of Minneapolis on July 27 was the most pleasant and near perfect Amtrak train I have ever ridden" (Alan J. Schmitt, Appleton, WI).

"Slumbercoach very nice; wish Amtrak had more routes with them. Great dome terrific except for lexan windows. Conductor came up and gave natural history of area. Lounge attendant turned on rock music so we could dance. Very friendly, young crew" (Jon Porter, Sunnyvale, CA).

"The service and food were excellent. We had the misfortune of running into a very bad blizzard south of Fargo and hit a car on the track that had been vacated. This delayed the train and then because of the storm the signals all went red. We lost 3 hours into Minneapolis. This was when the Amtrak crew really showed that they cared, as free coffee was served in the club lounge by an outstanding attendant. You could help yourself, but this man went out of his way to serve all with a most happy attitude. Breakfast was served by the dining car crew who were to detrain in Minneapolis. What a great crew! Even the conductors were so very courteous and helpful in every way" (Wilbert Felgenhauer, Steward, IL).

"Train has really improved since my last trip. The train is much better westbound for some reason. It is cleaner and personnel seem much more courteous and helpful westbound" (Stephen E. Morse, Marshall, MN).

"I was on a special 'make-up' train June 14 assembled at Minneapolis. The station supervisor in Minneapolis made a P.A. announcement explaining the 'make-up' train because of the delay to the regular train. He stated that some of the equipment, while safe, was not up to Amtrak's usual comfort standards. He asked for understanding in view of the circumstances. There were 110 passengers out of Minneapolis, and all were glad to be rolling, despite the defects. No one desired to wait 3 hours for the regular train, a choice which was offered. Mr. Tracy, the Milwaukee Road operator at Columbus, WI, was observed during the loading of this train, selling tickets and checking baggage and loading #9. He is a most energetic person who was trying very hard to be helpful" (Ralph E. Senn, River Falls, WI).

"Nasty old conductor comes up in long dome and turns the lights on at sundown. I ask why. He says he has orders. Whose, I ask. He says he can't say. Next morning on return trip, another nasty old conductor turns all of the lights on in the coaches at 5:30am. Gentleman across from me becomes rather unhappy about the whole thing and implies to conductor that if the lights aren't turned back off so he, his wife and kids can get some sleep, he's going to break them out. Lights go back out and come back on at a civilized 7am" (Frank W. Tobey, Clatskanie, OR).

These reader comments will be continued in the next issue with available space.

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Routes	Trains Operated Nov.'75	Per Cent On-Time Nov. '75	Oct. '75	Nov. '74
METROLINERS	834	81.5	87.4	88.1
TURBOTRAINS				
New York/Boston	110	46.4	43.1	75.5
TURBOLINERS				
Midwest	360	75.6	78.3	64.6
SHORT HAUL				
Oakland/Bakersfield	60	100.0	100.0	98.3
Seattle/Portland	120	98.3	95.2	88.3
Seattle/Vancouver	60	95.0	95.2	91.7
New York/Philadelphia	605	94.1	93.7	87.9
Minneapolis/Superior	60	93.3	100.0	---
Philadelphia/Harrisburg	529	93.2	89.1	84.8
Los Angeles/San Diego	180	92.8	95.2	87.8
Chicago/Milwaukee	250	92.4	88.4	93.3
Chicago/Minneapolis	34	91.2	94.3	79.0
Chicago/Quincy	60	90.0	96.8	81.7
Chicago/Port Huron	60	90.0	95.2	96.7
New York/Harrisburg	39	89.7	95.7	92.7
Boston/Albany	30	86.7	100.0	---
Chicago/Detroit	183	82.0	81.0	90.0
New Haven/Springfield	387	81.9	66.1	80.2
Chicago/Dubuque	60	81.7	72.6	91.7
New York/Washington	946	81.6	87.2	93.0
Washington/Cumberland	72	80.6	84.3	88.7
New York/Montreal	60	80.0	54.8	---
Washington/Springfield	30	76.7	50.0	73.3
Detroit/Jackson	38	76.3	60.9	---
New York/Albany	122	73.8	66.7	90.8
Chicago/St. Louis	170	59.4	63.6	51.3
Boston/Philadelphia	93	59.1	51.1	87.8
New York/Syracuse	60	58.3	82.3	93.3
New York/Boston	169	57.4	53.2	79.7
New York/Buffalo	60	55.0	51.6	87.0
Chicago/Carbondale	61	11.5	21.0	63.3
Chicago/Champaign	61	1.6	11.3	36.7
TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	4659	81.9	79.5	84.8
LONG DISTANCE				
Chicago/Seattle via Billings	25	96.0	88.9	94.3
Chicago/Norfolk	60	95.0	98.4	---
New York/Chicago via Pittsburgh	60	95.0	30.6	0.0
New York/St. Petersburg	120	95.0	94.4	93.3
Chicago/Boston	60	93.3	---	---
New York/Miami	60	91.7	91.9	96.7
Chicago/Miami	30	90.0	100.0	96.7
Chicago/Washington via Pittsburgh	60	90.0	90.3	48.3
New York/Kansas City	60	90.0	21.0	6.7
Seattle/Los Angeles	60	90.0	85.5	68.9
St. Louis/Laredo	60	88.3	74.2	69.2
Chicago/Los Angeles	60	86.7	93.6	86.7
Washington/Montreal	60	86.7	85.5	76.7
Chicago/Oakland	60	85.0	91.9	95.0
Chicago/Newport News	60	85.0	64.5	80.0
Chicago/Seattle via Havre	60	83.3	97.8	91.2
Chicago/Dallas	60	83.3	90.3	---
Chicago/Washington via Cincinnati	60	81.7	90.3	78.3
New York/Detroit	60	81.7	74.2	73.3
Washington/Boston	398	71.1	70.0	88.6
New York/Chicago via Buffalo	60	70.0	---	---
Chicago/Houston	60	65.0	66.1	95.0
Washington/Kansas City	24	62.5	13.6	25.6
New Orleans/Los Angeles	25	56.0	55.6	73.1
Chicago/St. Petersburg	60	46.7	50.0	56.7
Chicago/New Orleans	60	28.3	50.0	18.3
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	1822	79.4	75.4	74.6
TOTAL AMTRAK	6481	81.2	78.5	82.8

LONG DISTANCE TRAINS MAKE FAVORABLE SHOWING IN NEW AMTRAK DATA

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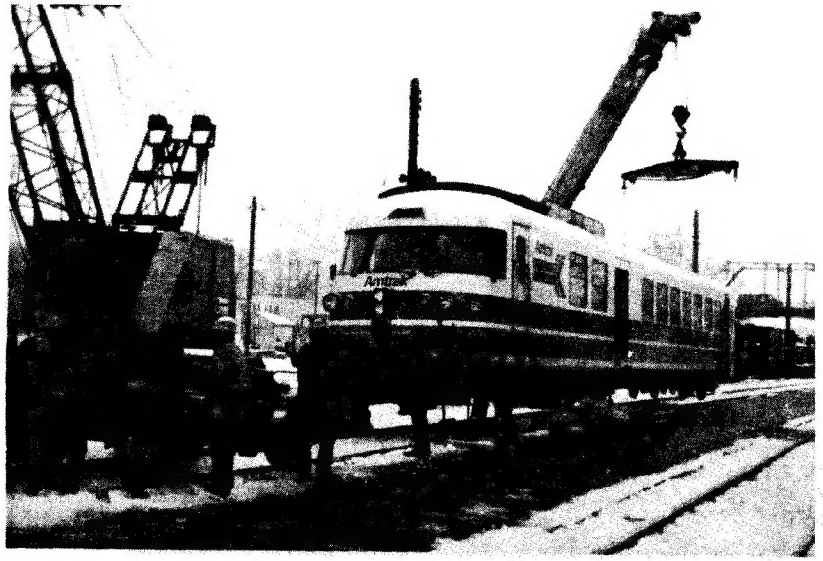
As usual, the changes were selective. Routes that showed gains included Chicago-Florida (9%), Chicago-New Orleans (7%), Chicago-Houston & Dallas (15%), and Washington/Newport News-Chicago (4%). The New New York/Boston-Chicago train accounted for 23,908 additional riders, but the most impressive increase came on the ADIRONDACK (Amtrak's "best" train in our survey), which increased 82%, from 4588 to 8350. The COAST STARLIGHT remained steady with no change. (Amtrak said that the LAKE SHORE LIMITED's good showing in its first month--1973 first class riders, 21,935 coach--made it the system's third busiest train in November. Note also that our survey gave it a high rating--10th place--for a new service of conventional equipment.) With the advent of the LAKE SHORE, the BROADWAY LIMITED lost ridership--down 16%. Other sizable deficits were shown by the MONTREALER (down 15%) and the INTER-AMERICAN (off 18%). The MOUNTAINEER carried 4783 passengers, but there were no comparison figures for 1974, since the train began operation last March 24.

Among short-haul trains, the Chicago-Detroit service was up 82% (from 17,903 to 32,672) with its added service and new Turbo equipment. The Springfield-New Haven route was up 47%, but included trains 144 and 149 not in the 1974 figures. Washington-Cumberland rose 14% and Philadelphia-Harrisburg was up 16%. Also showing 14% rises were Chicago-St. Louis and Seattle-Portland, while Chicago-Pt. Huron gained 11%. The new Jackson-Detroit and Minneapolis-Superior runs accounted for 5369 and 7242 riders not comparable to 1974 tallies. Gains of less than 10% were shown by Chicago-Quincy, Oakland-Bakersfield, and Chicago-Milwaukee. Balanced against these gains were deficits on these runs: NY-Washington (-3%), NY-Springfield (-27%), Boston-NY (-2%), Empire Service (-20%), Chicago-Carbondale (-16%), Los Angeles-San Diego (-5%), Seattle-Vancouver (-10%), and Chicago-Dubuque (-6%). When the first 11 months of recession year 1975 were compared with 1974, systemwide ridership was off 6%.

MOVING A MALFUNCTIONING TURBOLINER

Amtrak's Chicago-Detroit Turboliner 352, the 4:40pm departure of Dec 28, developed a "hot box" on its front axle, right side at Niles, Michigan, causing its 280 riders a delay of up to 3 hours. In the photo, a crew is working the next day on the scene in a repair attempt. Failing this, the power unit (#60--rest of consist, cars 90, 91, and 61, returned to Chicago) was pushed back to Chicago's Brighton Park for repairs. Before doing this, workers towed the unit to the old NYC turntable at Niles, but the table refused to turn. On the morning of the 30th, an engine from Jackson moved the Turbo to Chicago. Amtrak substituted conventional cars (from trains 350 and 355) for the bad-order Turbo. Passengers aboard the stalled train were placed on trains 364 and 354 at Niles and on three buses. Photo and notes by Dave Korkhouse.



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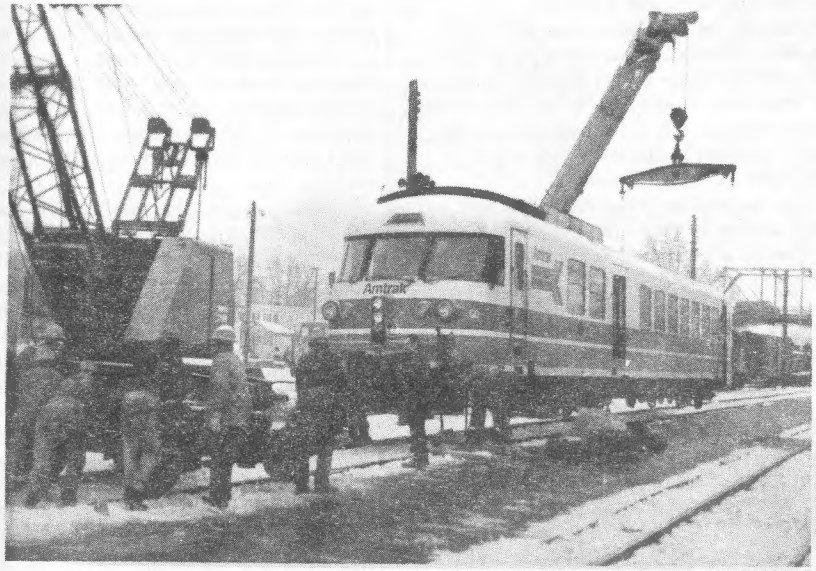

DC–Denver

BY ALFRED E. EHM

One experimental Amtrak route ordered by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation is a new direct train between Washington DC and Denver. In view of the varying and often contradictory things one hears about this upcoming service, it might be of interest to know what Amtrak told Congress about it. This information can be found in the report of the Senate Appropriations Committee, entitled "Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations. Fiscal Year 1976," Part 1, pp. 309-348. The report was issued in mid-1975.

At the hearing on May 13, 1975, the committee questioned Amtrak's new head quite extensively about the proposed train and even obliged him to furnish a special report which was then made a part of the record. Concerning the startup date, for example, Reistrup said first that the target date was October, 1975, added later that it might slip into year-end, and finally conceded to the committee that the service could not be started before June, 1976 at the earliest.

Reistrup said that the route was mandated by DOT and would be as follows: B&O Washington, Cumberland, Parkersburg, Athens and Chillicothe (OH) and Cincinnati; then PC to Indianapolis, Terre Haute, and St. Louis; then MP to Kansas City; AT&SF to Pueblo; and finally Colorado Springs and Denver over D&RGW. Between Indianapolis and Kansas City the train will be combined with the NATIONAL LIMITED in both directions.

Westbound, the train would leave Washington in the early afternoon, travel overnight to Pueblo, and come into Denver in late morning. Eastbound, the train would leave Denver in the early evening, arrive in Kansas City before noon the next day, travel overnight to Cincinnati, and arrive in Washington the following evening.

Among the problems listed by Reistrup were a critical shortage of diners and sleepers, the need to hard-spring all cars used on the B&O's mountainous route thru West Virginia, and the fact that PC's track between Cincinnati and Indianapolis is good for only 30mph! He also said that the Santa Fe has trackage rights only north of Pueblo and that the owner of the line, the D&RGW, was opposed to an Amtrak train over these rails. Also, D&RGW did not wish to make any station facilities available. (For more details, please refer to the report, which should be available in libraries that receive U.S. government documents.)

It can be said that if the train is operated as planned, it will undoubtedly be another substandard service. In 1964 and 1965 B&O operated two trains between Baltimore/Washington and St. Louis: Nos. 1 and 2, THE NATIONAL, and Nos. 11 and 12, THE METROPOLITAN. The trains remained on B&O for the entire journey. Direct connections to and from Indianapolis were provided in Cincinnati and St. Louis over NYC. In the late 1960s, C&O/B&O ruined the service by instituting a day-long wait in Cincinnati, and both segments were discontinued on May 1, 1971, when Amtrak started.

Prior to that, the rail traveler had two choices to get from Kansas City to Denver. He could take UP's ex-PORTLAND ROSE, Nos. 117 and 118, or AT&SF's SUPER CHIEF, Nos. 17 and 18, between Kansas City and La Junta, and the Denver connection, Nos. 191-190 and 201-200. The UP's route took 12 hours for 640 miles between K.C. and Denver, the Santa Fe's 12.2 hours for an 80-mile-longer route. (The latter indicates why Amtrak's SOUTHWEST LIMITED is still the fastest train today.)

To me it seems that the new Denver train has three things going against it: (1) the routing over PC into Indianapolis, (2) the combining with the NATIONAL LIMITED between Indianapolis and K.C., and (3) the routing over Santa Fe. I agree with the view of others, Colorado ARP for example, that until PC's track is good for at least 60mph service, the new train should stay on B&O into St. Louis, follow MoPac into Kansas City, and then utilize Union Pacific into Denver. The latter requires, of course, that Amtrak reinstate the Denver connection between the mile-high city and La Junta. In this way, Kansas City and Denver would again be connected by two rail passenger routes.

It might be argued that money could be saved by combining the new train with the NATIONAL LIMITED between Indianapolis and St. Louis. This is, however, not true. The NATIONAL is one of Amtrak's most problem-ridden trains. Operating the new Denver train over this route guarantees that the new service will also be slow and unreliable. Since the NATIONAL is late almost daily, its being combined with the Denver train will make that train late too. Moreover, since Indianapolis will retain the NATIONAL, it will not lose anything if the new train remains on B&O as far as St. Louis. From there it would run as a separate train into Kansas City, and from K.C. it would operate over Union Pacific into Topeka, Manhattan, Abilene, and Salina (KS), and from there into Denver. Since UP's right of way is top-notch anyway, and moreover, since UP is an Amtrak road, a 12-hour run between K.C. and Denver would again be possible.

Since the preparation of the above article, it has been learned that the DOT has asked for more information from Amtrak about the route. On Jan 15 Mr. Reistrup sent Secretary Coleman a letter informing him that he thinks that May 1, 1976 could be a startup date for at least the Washington-Kansas City segment of the route. He again pointed out the problems on the rest of run. He said that the La Junta-Denver line has siding and track repair problems. He said the Cincinnati-Indianapolis track is bad and would require 20mph speed limits. He again mentioned the need for hard springing in cars on the Washington-Parkersburg segment because of clearance problems, and the shortage of such equipment in the Amtrak fleet. Finally, he pointed out that operating costs are estimated to be higher than anticipated before: new figures estimate an annual cost of $9.1 million to run the train, but annual revenues of only $4.3 million.

One infers that Amtrak is not happy with the route selection, made by outgoing Secretary Brinegar reportedly to appease Senator Dole of Kansas, and the question has likely been raised in Washington of whether Secretary Coleman has the authority to withdraw the route selection.

-J.R.

CARS & CONSISTS

For the benefit of readers who are puzzled about Amtrak's car numbering system, here's a brief and over-simplified summary (for more details, see a volume such as the Railway Passenger Car Annual, advertised in RTN): 1000 and 1100-series, baggage cars; 1500-1600, baggage dorm and miscellaneous baggage combinations; 1700, misc. combination buffet cars; 2000, slumbercoaches; 2200-2700 series, sleepers; 3200, sleeper-lounges; 3300, buffet-lounges, dorm-lounges, etc.; 3600, parlor cars; 3700, parlor-lounges; 3800, misc. coach-lounges; 3900, snack bar coaches; 4400-7200 series, coaches, the first two numerals indicating number of seats; 8000, diners; 8100-8400 series, misc. combination diners & lunch counter cars; 9200, dome sleepers; 9300, dome lounge and obs. cars; 9400-9500, dome coaches; 9800, misc. coffee shop domes; 9900, ex-ATSF high-level cars; 20000 series, Amfleet cars.

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8, all 6 consists recorded at Seattle: (Dec 31) engines 531, 574; cars 1011, 1002, 1553, 4814, 4545, 4823, 4851, 9365 "River View", 8066, 9224, 2674 "Silver Channel", 2260 "Placid Bay". (Jan 1) engines 563, 540; cars 1004, 1114, 2153 "Silver Iris" (dorm), 4863, 4529, 9481, 4546, 9363 "Lake View", 8069, 9223, 2624 "Pacific Patrol", 2267 "Placid Vale". (Jan 2) engines 541, 533; cars 1058, 1009 "Silver Mesa", 1422, 9480, 4526, 9458 "Silver Brand", 4501, 9364 "Prairie View", 8096, 9211, 2676 "Silver Ravine", 2253 "Star Range". (Jan 3) engines 578, 534; cars 1110, 1041, BN 425, 4891, 4539, 9450, 4543, 9361 "Ocean View", 8094, 9210, 2671 "Silver Plateau", 2266 "Placid Sea". (Jan 4) engines 561, 576; cars 1007, 1000, 2450 "Lewis & Clark Pass" (dorm), 4550, 4532, 9482, 9465, Great Dome with no number--probably 9362 "Mountain View", 8046, 9225, 2651 "Silver Shore", 2211 "Indian Drum". (Jan 5) engines 538, 577; cars 1064, 1109, 1551, 4527, 4525, 9501 "Silver Glade", 9472, 9800 "Silver Garden", 8095, 9212, 2659 "Silver Isle", 2263 "Placid Lake".

*SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR at Omaha Jan 11: (train 5) engines 586, 624; cars 1189, 1057, 2672, 4805, 4552, 4470, 9460, 9383, 8102, 2251, 2653. (train 6) engines 580, 585; cars 4471 (deadhead?), 1028, 1573, 4484, 4807, 4476, 9454, 9384, 8044, 2631, 2658, 1917 (heater car).

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train First 41 (DC section) at Pittsburgh Jan 1: engine 592; cars 1027, 5411, 5406, 2002, 8323, 2560 "Wrigley Field", 3925. Second 41 (NY section): engines 598, 589; cars 1065, 2025 "Loch Leven", 2022 "Silver Rest", 5256, 5266, 5662, 5259, 3403, 8800-8801, 3209 "Rippling Stream", 2556 "The Potomac", 2559 "Windy City". First 40 (NY section): engines 597, 599, 450 (E9B); cars 1108, 2023 "Silver Repose", 2000, 5268, 5254, 5404, 5272, 3404, 8804-8805, 3250 "Wawasee", 2262 "Placid Haven", 2558 "Rock Creek". Second 41 (DC section): engine 594; cars 1101, 6058, 5430, 2028 "Loch Tarbert", 8332, 2552 "Brooklyn Bridge". Train 41, NY section, at New York Jan 4: engine 918 (GG-1); cars 1163, 2029, 2000, 5268, 5254, 5404, 5272, 3404, 8804-8805, 3250 "Wawasee", 2684, 2559.

*MERCHANTS LIMITED, train 178 at Washington Dec 31: engine 967 (E60CP); cars 20113 (Amclub), 21066, 21064, 21063, 21021, 21068 (Paul Reistrup & other VIPs inspected the new electric loco, and Reistrup boarded the Amclub car for New York).

*JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, train 51 at Washington Dec 31: engine 610; cars 1076, 1531, 2012 "Gull", 5601, 6025, 6008, 8100, private car 416 "Lionel Ives" (who owns it?). No regular sleeper on train; slumbercoach seems to have become permanent.

WE ARE SWAMPED with holiday consists submitted by readers. We can't fit any more into this issue; we'll see what we can do for future publication.

Rail Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS has asked the Canadian Transport Commission for approval of a 15% passenger fare increase to take effect Feb 1. It also wants to add a surcharge of 12½% on summer peak period travel (June 27-Sep 11). Montreal commuter fare increases of up to 25% previously announced are also set to become effective on Feb 1.

CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION is expected to announce Jan 29 any policy changes for Canadian passenger service, as required by law, every 5 years. It is expected that most policy discussion will focus on the transcontinental service of CP Rail and CN. Any announcement by new transport minister Otto Lang prior to that date may effect the final wording of the policy statement. It is now known that a consultant firm study of the transcon services completed last August recommended a "spinal" system of one thru trans-Canada train, with feeder service. Meanwhile, budget cuts have pruned $10 million from the $70 million transcontinental subsidy.

UNITED AIRCRAFT TURBOTRAIN damaged by a fire last fall will be rebuilt, CN announced in a surprise move. The unit is expected to be back in service from Montreal to Toronto, and possibly Ottawa, by April.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAIL said Dec 15 that it is asking the CTC to approve a 15% increase on all rail and sleeping car charges on its passenger trains, to be effective Jan 15.

WHILE CANADIAN NATIONAL has prepared to scrap about 15% of its passenger cars this year, a report from Canada says that tight government budgetary controls have killed any railroad plans for buying new equipment. Control of inflation is the reason for the government's tight fiscal policy.

CN'S WEEKLY ROUNDTRIP commuter run from Grenville to Montreal will be discontinued, the CTC decided late in 1975. The train had averaged 4 passengers per trip.

FORMER TRANSPORT MINISTER J. W. Pickersgill, in a letter to the Toronto Globe & Mail (Dec 27) said that "Ideally, if we are serious about fighting inflation, one of the most effective single steps would be to stop all passenger trains at the earliest possible date. Practically that would be impossible but the objective should be to phase out transcontinental, long-distance and intercity trains which cannot pay for themselves. There is probably economic justification for continuing commuter trains, though it has never been proven." Pickersgill termed passenger trains an operation "for a small favored few largely at the expense of all other Canadians."

THE NEW B.C. Transport Minister Jack Davis has announced an impending ferry fare increase, the first since 1960. He also said that plans to dissolve the newly-formed B.C. Steamship Co. have been dropped, and the line's two vessels, the steamers "Princess Marguerite" and "Prince George", will not be placed under B.C. Ferries, as Premier Bill Bennett had promised in election campaigning.

FORMER CN PASSENGER vice president Pierre Delagrave, now marketing executive for the LRC passenger train consortium, has criticized the Ottawa government's delay in deciding to acquire such equipment for Canadian lines. He said the Ministry of Transport experts have been studying the LRC to death.

THE NEWLY ELECTED British Columbia Social Credit government has halted all transit projects underway at election time. Bus purchases have stopped, and the scheduled Dec 19 introduction of transit service in Kamloops postponed, much to the irritation of Kamloops business and political figures.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Since World War II, rail's share (of intercity travelers) has dropped steadily. Why? ... 'The cost in time was so heavy that only the affluent elderly and the poor kept riding,' explains UCLA economist George Hilton, an avid rail buff and a vocal Amtrak critic. 'Now there's no reason to waste money just so 100,000 nostalgia nuts can pursue a hobby.'"

--Forbes magazine, December 15, 1975

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK WILL REPLACE the torn-up 12.1 miles of Penn Central track on the LAKE SHORE LIMITED line in New York State, said news reports early this month. Amtrak president Reistrup was reportedly pleased with the train's patronage, a fact which led to his decision on the track replacement. No timetable for replacement was given...

AMTRAK TOOK OVER the Penn Central's 12th St. yard and 16th St. locomotive shop in Chicago on Jan 16, the corporation reported that day. This is the first major maintenance base to be taken over by Amtrak, the company said. It is planning to similarly acquire a number of bases in Northeastern cities later. The 12th St. yard was chosen rather than the BN or ATSF facilities because of easy access, largest area, most manpower, closeness to Chicago Union Station, and because a rail passenger operation was already existing there. A total of 277 Amtrak cars are maintained there, and when BN and ATSF forces are consolidated there, the number will increase to 519 cars and 120 diesel units..... AN ERRONEOUS REPORT of a Sept 1 startup of a revived San Francisco-Monterey DEL MONTE train appeared in Herb Caen's column in the San Francisco Chronicle Jan 16. The columnist said that Amtrak, Caltrans and county supervisors approved the decision at a meeting in Watsonville. Local Amtrak officials were out of town, but people working on the DEL MONTE project said it was news to them. Amtrak in Washington said flatly the report was totally erroneous, that it has no plans for a DEL MONTE revival. And SP told the Bay Area press that it has "no room" for a passenger train at its new 4th & Townsend commute station (the revived train is planned to run out of San Francisco's SP station).....

* * *

SOME STRANGE VIBES are occurring on the EMPIRE BUILDER, judging by comments in our second train rating survey. Passengers are being polarized by conditions on the train--they either love it or hate it. The condition seems traceable to train personnel, or at least some train personnel. Looks like a case where Amtrak should step in and take firm control. Meanwhile, Amtrak is having a survey of employees made by J. J. Jensen & Associates of Flossmoor, IL. An 8-page questionnaire of 129 agree-disagree statements and a cover letter from Paul Reistrup assuring respondents that Amtrak will never personally see their answers, comprises the survey. Sample statements are: "Most of the time I don't know who my boss is; I get orders from too many people" and "In my opinion, catering to passengers' whims is a demeaning job"..... THERE'S AN ERROR in the Oct 26 Amtrak form 6 (Chicago-Dallas/Houston/New Orleans & St. Louis-Laredo) timetable, which is repeated in the Nov 30 All-America schedules, reports Duane Roller: the times for train 16 at Oklahoma City should be 6:10 & 6:20pm, not 6 & 6:10; and for the same train at Perry it should be 7:30pm, not 7:20..... THE SP TRACK between San Antonio and Lake Charles is now the "worst on the railroad," reports a reader. Speeds of 30mph are necessary around Beaumont, and rail joints were visibly out of line near Houston West Junction. Compare the times for 3 trips on the San Antonio-Houston segment: Jan 1972, 4:05; Aug 1973, 4:33; Dec 1975, 5:04..... THE MONTREALER'S PATRONAGE seems at an all-time high this past Christmas season. But a rider says the train is still having problems with CN in Montreal. It regularly leaves late southbound because it doesn't leave the yards on time, and CN employees in Montreal Central Station often refuse to help Amtrak passengers. On Jan 4 it arrived 2:05 late into Montreal, and despite 20 passengers trying to connect, and a call from the conductor at Cantic, CN refused to hold its 11:40am Rapido the necessary 10 minutes to connect. One CN employee said later, "We don't hold connections for Americans"..... DOES THE STATION at Deland, Florida have adequate passenger controls? On Jan 7 a mother and 4-year-old daughter were killed when they were struck by the southbound AUTO-TRAIN, a 56-car train going thru at 62mph. The two had come to see friends off on an Amtrak train to New York, and the child ran onto the tracks and her mother tried to retrieve her. The dead woman, Molly O'Neal Holmes of Ocala, was a sister of actor Patrick O'Neal.....

THE MOST VITRIOLIC anti-passenger train article we've seen recently is the article "Track to Nowhere" in Forbes magazine, Dec 15 (see QUOTES, p. 14). The article leads off with: "You can make a great case for running passenger trains on the Washington-Boston corridor. But the rest of Amtrak is a rolling pork barrel." Stories like this tend to appear at times when important appropriations are being decided in Washington, and one wonders how much the big oil and highway cartels influence their appearance in the media. This particular one is insidious because it presents some cleverly worked out arguments that seem quite logical on first reading. However, what they boil down to is the writer's opinion versus ours. We simply believe that people and their needs come before accounting systems. People are what life is all about. Accounting controls are necessary, but putting them before people needs is putting the cart before the horse. Or the cartel before the horse..... A MASSIVE PILEUP of 52 cars and trucks on an icy highway, I-81 in Syracuse, NY on Jan 3 injured 65 people, some seriously. And four people died in a 19-car & truck crash in fog on highway 50 at Sacramento, CA on Jan 17. A Greyhound bus was also involved. The old saying used to be: "The horseless carriage shall go, and shall fill the world with woe"..... SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR was delayed leaving Chicago over an hour on Jan 3 by a telephoned bomb scare. Police found no bomb aboard, after 200 passengers were detrained at the BN station at Cicero, IL..... OUR JACK FERRY was aboard the ABRAHAM LINCOLN Jan 11 as it left Chicago with an over-capacity crowd. The regular parlor car had been bad ordered and sleeper-lounge "City of Chicago" substituted, which turned out to have no lights. Once again Jack's attempt to ride the popular parlor car was frustrated..... AMCOACHES ARE RUNNING on the SHAWNEE (trains 391-2) and on trains 303-4 Chicago-St. Louis. On Jan 11, train 391 looked like this: engine 704, cars 21073, 20002 (Amcafe), 21076, and 21071. And train 304 had engine 720, cars 21070, 21069, 20005 (Amcafe), and 21048. Two B units rebuilt into steam generators, nos. 1916 and 1917, are now operating out of Chicago..... LAKE SHORE LIMITED will get a slumbercoach, effective Feb 1..... AMTRAK'S MINUTE MAN was observed at Boston's Back Bay Station at 4:30pm Jan 8, finishing its run from DC, with E units detached and Amfleet power generator car ablaze. The car is one of the newer models --the shorter version which isn't a converted coach. The car appeared a total loss, and reported damage was $120,000..... THE NIGHT OWL arrived in Boston Jan 7 with what seemed to be a track inspection/ride evaluation car on its tail.....

* * *

EXPECT NEW STOPS to be inaugurated soon at these locations in the Amtrak system: Aberdeen, MD; Dillon, SC; Kingstree, SC; Valparaiso, IN..... OFFICIAL BUS GUIDE for Jan reports that John J. Gilhooley has been elected to the board of directors of the National Association of Motor Bus Owners. He is chairman of Transport of New Jersey (remember when he was on Amtrak's board in the Lewis years?)..... SANTA BARBARA WOMAN last month committed suicide by lying on the tracks before the oncoming southbound COAST STARLIGHT at Goleta..... HERE'S MORE INFO on Frank Sinatra's trip to Chicago, mentioned last issue. They left San Bernardino, CA on Dec 28 in private car "Hulham" (owned by Overland Rail Tours) on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED (our date given before was in error), and the car returned, apparently empty, on the SWL on Jan 2 from Chicago. The singer was accompanied by 10 travelers. A news report said that Amtrak's Supervisor of Dining Cars rode along from New Mexico to Chicago to see that all went well. Some meals were served from the regular SWL menu, but Sinatra's favorite breads and cold meats were flown in from a New York delicatessen, and cases of expensive French and Italian wines were put aboard the car. The party were served drinks in the train's lounge, and Sinatra gave out a couple of autographs. One special breakfast of "sliced home fried potatoes with onions and scrambled eggs cooked in olive oil" was prepared in the train's kitchen and brought back to the rear observation car. The car carried a NORTH COAST LIMITED drumhead this trip (it's ex-NP 322, "Tacoma Club"), and Santa Fe president John Reed was reportedly riding westbound in his private car when the two trains met, and Reed was surprised at the NCL lettering on the Amtrak train on his railroad.....

AMTRAK'S PET POLICY has changed, effective Feb 15, the corporation announced "reluctantly" on Jan 8. No more pets (except seeing-eye dogs) on Amtrak trains, except in containers in baggage cars (Amtrak will sell containers at some stations). Amtrak said it was responding to complaints from riders. Amtrak said passengers could visit pets in baggage cars at stops of 10mins or longer if prior arrangements are made with the train conductor..... THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of Railroad Passengers held organizational meetings in several places Jan 10, partly to elect new regional officers. At the Los Angeles meeting for the Southwestern area, among the recommendations made was one urging Amtrak to build prototypes of new sleepers before going ahead and ordering quantities of a new design. In San Francisco, for the Northwest area, 25 people attended and elected four directors, including incumbent Arthur Lloyd of Amtrak's regional office. A group from that area will meet soon to form a Bay Area group to work on such projects as reviving the DEL MONTE, the LARK, and pushing for commuter service to Sacramento. NARP has serious financial problems, and can use new members (minimum membership is $10/yr, from NARP, 417 New Jersey Ave. S.E., Washington DC 20003. Phone 202-546-1550. On Jan 17, NARP was to hold a 6-state regional meeting in Dallas. Amtrak, the Texas DOT, the Texas Transportation Institute, the news media, and others were invited, in conjunction with TexARP and TexAPT (Austin)..... REPORTS SAY THAT Santa Fe did offer the SUPER CHIEF name back to Amtrak, but president Reistrup said they would work to deserve it before accepting it. There are continuing reports of Amtrak's program to upgrade the train. One is that glassware has now replaced plastic in the bar car of the SOUTHWEST LIMITED..... NEW HAVEN REGISTER has editorialized (Jan 5) in favor of reviving passenger service on the Inland Route. The paper points out that the route is only 3 miles longer than the Shoreline Route thru New London and Providence, but has 1,150,000 more potential passengers. It calls for Connecticut to invest $2 million in track repair for high speed service; Massachusetts has already agreed to do so. The Bay State legislature approved a bond bill to provide that money, and it was awaiting the Governor's signature early this month.....

* * *

NEW ROCK ISLAND schedules have lengthened running times of the QUAD CITIES ROCKET by 50mins (leave Chicago 5:35pm, arrive Rock Island 10:10; leave R.I. 6:45am, ar Chicago 11:15am) and the PEORIA ROCKET by an hour or so (lv Chicago 6:15pm, ar Peoria 10:40pm; lv Peoria 6:45am, ar Chicago 11:20am)..... THE RILEY/MOUNTAINEER westbound on Jan 3 struck a pickup truck that had braked but skid on icy pavement, critically injuring the driver. Happened a few miles south of Muncie..... READER ROBERT CLARK of Florida writes: From the schedules of Freedom Train and Ringling Bros. Blue Unit circus train, it appears there will be a conjunction of Freedom Train northbound, circus train southbound, and FLORIDIAN southbound on the L&N between Bowling Green and Louisville, KY on June 14. And to answer Mr. Clark's question, the diesels did not do all the work on the AFT on Tehachapi Loop, as you will see next issue..... AN AUSTRALIAN TRAIN crash Jan 16 killed 2 and injured 7 when a freight rear-ended a passenger train in a tunnel 60 miles west of Sydney... SEPTA WILL PURCHASE five commuter lines from PC and Reading in the ConRail shuffle, saving them from extinction. They are the Reading's Newtown, Doyestown and Chestnut Hill lines; the PC's Chestnut Hill and Chester-Wilmington lines. The PC 30th St. Station and the Reading terminal in Philadelphia..... AMTRAK'S DECISION TO buy the Colonial Corridor rather than lease it from ConRail came from its board on Jan 6. The price is about $85 million..... AN IRISH TRAIN derailed in S.E. Ireland Dec 31, killing 5 and injuring 22. The tracks had been damaged by a truck hauling a mechanical digger. The truck driver tried in vain to warn the engineer... WASHINGTON'S TRANSIT SYSTEM has been lengthened by two miles, with extra track between Rockville and Gaithersburg approved late last month..... GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL in NY City has been saved by a state appeals court ruling Dec 17 that owner Penn Central cannot build a skyscraper atop it..... FOUR RAILROAD UNIONS formally approved the new contract (mentioned here earlier) on Jan 13, leaving no unions now with pending feuds with the railroads.....

Express Ads

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1976 RAILROADIANA and MODEL RAILROAD SALE, sponsored by Tri-State Chapter NRHS. Sat. May 1, 1976 10 AM to 5 PM; Sun. May 2, 10 AM to 4 PM. Tables $10 (2 days) before April 15, with free admission. General admission: $1 Adults, 50¢ kids. Refreshments, Slide & Movie shows. Dover Senior High School, Dover NJ at I-80. Register: Tri-State Chapter NRHS, P.O. Box 255, Dover NJ 07801. (201) 366-8824.

"STEAMY" -- FOR YOUNG RAIL ENTHUSIASTS! "Steamy" is a locomotive on the ex D & RGW narrow gauge, now the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. 28 pages to color plus an exciting story gives youngsters a feeling for Rocky Mountain Railroading as it was. $2.00. Dave Ulmer, 1407 Holmes Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80909.

CONSISTS WANTED 1960-1975 Western trains including excursions. I have consists of San Francisco Zephyr, Starlight and San Joaquin for trade. Ron Hook, 869 Rosemount Road, Oakland, CA 94610.

THERE IS A GIANT VACUUM CLEANER moving across the nation sucking up all timetables that come within its grasp. It's called Antique Timecard Acquisitors and in return for timetable collections large and small it pays top dollar. We want everything from Colorado Midlands to BART timetables. You're out of your head if you don't at least give us a shot at your collection. 126 Coconut Dr., Ft. Myers Beach, Florida 33931.

Dining car china dishes and glasses, 10 railroads. Stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Kansas 67213.

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WANTED: Public Timetables 1971 & 1972. Particularly need Railroad Produced for Amtrak, UP, MP, GM&O, BN, Milw, C&O, SF. C. Loucks 199 Wayland, Hamden CT 06518.

Mint condition unused copies Official Guide: 1968 - 9, 10, 11, 12; 1969 - 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12; 1970 - 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12. $4.50 each postpaid. Kindly give alternate choices. Carl V. Ehrke, PO Box 571 - Terminal A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1E4.

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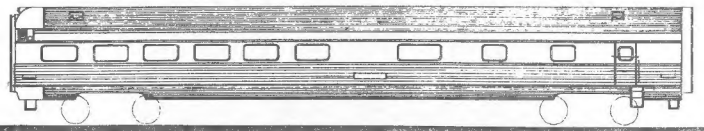

Volume II 1975

LISTS PASSENGER CARS IN SERVICE ON U.S. AND CANADIAN RAILROADS DURING 1974.

1. Updated Amtrak Roster includes cars renumbered and acquired during 1974.
2. All passenger cars owned by U.S. and Canadian Railroads including:
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